In the midst of navigating the tumultuous hardships of adolescence, 12-year-old mathematics genius Prem Patel discovers that his recently deceased father was a famous rapper and immediately sets out to pursue a career for himself as a rap superstar. While his recent actions may appear reckless and the quickest way for him to lose everything, Prem, empowered by imaginative hip-hop–fueled fantasies where he performs with his father, is determined to find out if hip-hop truly is in his DNA. As his father always used to say, "the world's best never rest."

"World's Best," an Old 320 Sycamore production, is directed by Roshan Sethi and stars Utkarsh Ambudkar, Manny Magnus, Punam Patel, Jake Choi, Max Malas, Piper Wallace, Kayla Njeri, Dorian Giordano, Christopher Jackson and Doug E. Fresh. Written by Jamie King & Utkarsh Ambudkar, the original film is produced by Thomas Kail and Kate Sullivan, with Terry Gould and Utkarsh Ambudkar serving as executive producers.

The film's below-the-line talent includes director of photography Sing Howe Yam ("Flaked," "Into the Dark"), production designer Liz Bischof ("Son of a Critch," "See"), editor Jonah Moran, ACE ("Hamilton," "Fosse/Verdon"), costume designer Michelle Lyte ("Suicide Squad," "The Handmaid's Tale"), choreographer Bradley Rapier ("2Gether," "B-Girl"), original score composers Raashi Kulkarni and Jongnic Bontemps ("Ifine: Beauty," "Wedding Season") and co-producer Kelly Applegate ("Up Here," "Fosse/Verdon").

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

Disney's "World's Best" brings together a group of the most exciting talents working in music, theater, film and television today for a feel-good hip-hop musical comedy film premiering exclusively on Disney+ on June 23.

"World's Best" is the brainchild of Utkarsh Ambudkar ("Free Guy," Marvel's "Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur," "The Dropout"), aka UTK the INC, who co-wrote the screenplay, collaborated on the music, executive produced and stars in the film.

Ambudkar's long history in hip-hop music inspired him to want to create a film musical about and featuring hip-hop.

He says, "I've rapped at the Oscars®, I've been in 'Freestyle Love Supreme' on Broadway, which won a Tony®, and I was in groups from when I was 17, performing at venues like the Nuyorican Poets Cafe in New York. I've performed and rapped all over the country and the world, so hip-hop is in my DNA."

He and his longtime friend/co-writer Jamie King ("Jessica Jones," "Impulse") drew from their own experiences in writing the script. They attended NYU together, where they both fell in love with hip hop.

King lived in the East Village, down the street from a club called Sin-Sin, which had an upstairs venue called The Leopard Lounge, where they held a freestyle rap competition every Monday. Ambudkar was evolving from someone who rapped at college parties into a professional emcee, and he'd perform in the rap battle while King cheered him on.

Says King, "It was a really cool experience and a formative time in our lives, and it inspired all the Leopard Lounge stuff as well as the song 'Halfway Livin'' featured in the film."

They created a protagonist, 12-year-old Prem Patel, who, like Ambudkar and King, is an only child and a math whiz. Although still in middle school, he attends math classes at a high school, like Ambudkar did at that age.

Ambudkar recalls, "They bussed me to the high school, where I was with a bunch of big kids, but I wasn't like Prem, though. I had no business being there. I don't know what I was doing there. I didn't do well."

Nevertheless, he and King decided to make their hero a true mathematics whiz who, like so many kids his age, discounts the gifts he has while longing for something else. So, despite his amazing skill, Prem feels discontent, unfulfilled and tired of being bullied because he's a math "geek." His once-BFF Jerome has a girlfriend who is tight with all the popular kids who bully Prem, so they're on the outs. More than anything, Prem wants to be cool and hang out with people who are cool. He lives with his widowed mother, Priya, who strongly believes that math is his ticket to a secure and successful future. She nags him about preparing for the upcoming "Mathlympics" competition, which was inspired by a math tournament King attended in seventh grade called the "Math Olympiad" in Washington state.

King says, "I remember walking into this huge gym, and realizing that all the other teams were way more serious and prepared, and we were NOT going to win."

Ambudkar and King based the character of Priya on their own mothers.

King says, “We both had mothers that expected a lot out of us academically and weren’t shy about pushing us to get there. That experience was a little challenging at the time but is a big part of who we are now. So, when we look at Priya and Prem, I think we both see a version of our young selves.”

Still grieving the loss of her husband after five years, Priya is understandably protective of her son and has told him very little about his late father, not having fully processed his death herself.

When his math teacher at the high school gives the class an assignment to define who they are, Prem, wrestling with Priya’s expectations and low self-esteem, finds himself at a loss.

But everything changes one day when Prem hears from an old friend of his father’s that his dad, Suresh, was actually a famous rapper. When he gets home, he confronts Priya about this, and she tells him about how she and Suresh first met and how impressed she was when she saw him rap. His interest piqued, Prem secretly investigates his mom’s closet and finds an old shoebox with some of Suresh’s possessions. There’s a gold chain, ticket stubs from a Doug E. Fresh concert, a floppy disk full of Suresh’s old songs, a small Krishna statue and a rhyme book, which really intrigues him. He had no idea that his dad was such a cool guy.

Trying on his father’s gold chain, Prem is stunned when all of a sudden Suresh, portrayed by Ambudkar, materializes right in front of him, professing to be Prem’s new mentor in life. Totally psyched, Prem decides that rap music is his ticket to becoming the kind of cool person he’s always wanted to be. Believing that hip-hop is in his DNA, he signs up for the school talent show, even though he’s never rapped before. Still, Prem is determined to be the World’s Best MC. And, like a guardian angel, Suresh will be there with him to show him the ropes.

To punctuate these father-and-son “fantasy” sequences, Ambudkar and King envisioned wildly imaginative Bollywood-style musical numbers featuring hip-hop compositions.

Ambudkar was thrilled when Disney’s head of production, Sean Bailey, responded enthusiastically to his idea for a hip-hop coming-of-age musical. Moreover, Ambudkar, whose parents emigrated to America from India in the 1980s, was especially buoyed by what the film would represent to other kids with similar backgrounds.

He says, “I’m excited for the first time in a Disney film to present a South Asian family at the core of a movie. It’s something I never had growing up, and it’s something that I didn’t know I needed. And so, in making this movie and in working with Disney, it was of paramount importance for me to give youth today something that I didn’t have when I was growing up.

“I wanna help young people and adults become comfortable with who they are,” he added.

Thomas Kail (“Hamilton”), who directed Ambudkar in the Broadway production of “Freestyle Love Supreme,” and Kate Sullivan (“Fosse/Verdon,” “Up Here”) were brought on to produce, with Terry Gould (“Raised by Wolves,” “Swamp Thing”) tapped to executive produce with Ambudkar.

Charlie Wilder, Ambudkar's longtime collaborator, joined him to compose the songs for the film.

Ambudkar says, "These songs all wrote themselves. There were very few moments where it felt like work. It just felt like Prem and Suresh and Priya were telling us what to write."

They passed along their raw compositions to executive song producer Savan Kotecha, who with his partner Arnter Bridgeson of the Max Martin Camp, have been responsible for many hits.

"They just took our tracks and exploded them into a really unique and modern feel.," Ambudkar says. "Live horns, really powerful drums, strong bass lines. Every song is its own genre, which is beautiful."

He adds, "Our songs are bright and free and catchy and full of energy, and hopefully you'll be pressing repeat on the Spotifys and the Apple Musics and the Disney playlists. And it'll be up there with the 'Encanto's and everything in terms of the new thing that's driving parents insane when they're driving to school. You're gonna get tons of music."

To direct "World's Best," Ambudkar and producers Kail and Sullivan chose radiation oncologist turned filmmaker Roshan Sethi, who won an Independent Spirit Award for his 2021 comedy-drama "7 Days."

Sethi recalls, "I was really excited by the script, which was full of emotion and comedy. I was also extremely moved by the music, which existed at a preliminary stage even before the project was made. It is rare to see a studio movie like this one made with such diverse representation above and below the line."

Sethi felt a special connection to one of the script's major themes. He says, "I think kids get a lot of pressure to identify their future early on. Prem begins the movie thinking he has to find his path and eventually learns that he doesn't have to be just one thing. I think it's OK to be more than one thing, to have more than one passion and to not know who you are or what you're capable of. That really resonated with me as someone who has pursued both medicine and Hollywood, science and art."

Remembering his first meeting with Sethi, Ambudkar says, "He was really enthusiastic about it. He's a brilliant guy. His vision for the movie was so specific. The color palette, the pace of the story, how he wanted to shoot the musical numbers, what he felt connected to in the story. He grew up in a very similar way to Prem, with a single mother who was very keen on academic excellence. And Roshan really responded emotionally and spiritually to the story.

"We were really strapped for time," he adds, "and we needed a very special director to take that lead, and he's done it with aplomb. He was so prepared. He's great, and he's lovely to work with. I knew Roshan Sethi could capture the intricacies, humor and energy of 'World's Best.'"

On the subject of Ambudkar, Sethi says, “Utkarsh is a multi-hyphenate in every sense of the word. He really can do almost anything, from acting to singing to producing to writing. And dancing. As he told me, he’s an 8 out of 10 at dancing.”

Says Ambudkar, “We’re all independent artists who had been following our own voices, and then we all got to work together and take our individual talents and share them with the world together. It was like forming the Power Rangers on this one. It’s very cool.”

“WORLD’S BEST” CAST

After seeing hundreds of young actors for the lead role of Prem, the filmmakers selected Atlanta-based Manny Magnus. A musical prodigy, Magnus has been performing since he was a toddler. Prior to this, he appeared in two episodes of the Netflix series “Raising Dion” and in the films “Home Team,” “I Want You Back” and “Game Changer” and lent his voice to the short “Elf Pets: Santa’s Reindeer Rescue.”

Explaining his character, Magnus says, “Prem is very smart, quick-witted, funny. He’s very good at math—in fact, he takes math class with 11th graders. He’s just trying to find his place in the world. One of the main problems he faces in his school is fitting in. His social status isn’t very good because he’s seen as a nerd and is pretty much bullied by all the popular kids.

“Prem really just wants to be cool, and he thinks that rapping can make him cool and more popular and able to stand up to the bullies. Rapping helps Prem’s self-confidence at school and also makes him feel closer to his dad, who died when he was young, so he’s never had a father figure. So, it’s like a father-and-son thing. And it’s finally something that is not math, so it’s kind of refreshing to him as well. So, to be the world’s best MC is to be loved, to be cool, to be popular. Basically, to be like his father.”

Of Magnus, Ambudkar says, “He’s a natural, thoughtful, very kind, gentle young man. Also brilliant, very smart, quick, fun to work with. He brings a sweetness and impishness, sort of a mischievous joy to Prem, which we really need. Prem is a hopeful, joyful kid. He’s having a bit of a rough go in life, but he’s not sad. He’s strong, he’s brave, he’s willing to change. He wants to be better, and I love that about Manny because he’s like that too. He’s very eager to improve, and that kind of fire is a unique and really positive quality to have in a young person.”

“Almost everyone who worked with Manny or witnessed his performance believes that a new star is born,” raves Sethi. “But putting aside his extreme talent at so many things, Manny is so hardworking and kind and unusually intelligent and mature for his age.”

Ambudkar says that he and King wrote the role of Priya, Prem’s mother, with actress Punam Patel in mind, with whom he had worked on “Ghosts,” “Special” and “Mira, Royal Detective.”

He says, “I only ever pictured Punam doing it. There was never a second choice. Punam is warm, kind, and she’s one of the funniest people I’ve ever worked with. She just has a way of really bringing comedy to her emotion to keep things light and free, and she’s just a dream to work with. What she brings to Priya is a humorous way of looking at what is at times a difficult situation. And she just is the type of person who you believe would put other people before herself. She helps everyone around her. She’s got a ton of whatever you call it—spark, zazz. She got a lot of that good stuff. And I love working with her. She makes me laugh every day.”

Says Patel, “When Utkarsh wrote this script, he told me from the beginning, I want it to be you. I am just so honored that he advocated for me for this role and that he really trusted me with it. And not only did he trust me to play Priya, but he really encouraged me to bring my own self and my own take on her as well.”

She explains, “The thing I love about Priya is she’s not just your typical strict Asian mom, focused on academics. You really get to see she’s a 360-degree human. You understand why she is strict with her son. You understand the trauma she’s been through in losing her husband. And you see that she is struggling. Priya just wants her son to be the best and succeed, because she is so worried that his life might be insufficient because he’s lost his father.”

Sethi says, “Punam is one of the funniest people I’ve ever met. A very large percentage of her dialogue in the movie is improvised. She also has a subtle and emotional way with non-comedic sense. I really am in awe of her talent.”

Jake Choi, best known for his role as Miggy on the ABC comedy “Single Parents,” plays Prem’s high school math teacher Mr. Choi, who gives the class a homework assignment that starts Prem thinking about who he is and what he wants out of life.

Max Malas plays Prem’s friend Jerome, who ditches Prem when he gets a new girlfriend and gains an in with the popular crowd. Like Magnus, Malas is a relative newcomer, having appeared only on the TV series “Little Voice,” “Teenage Euthanasia” and “New Amsterdam” and in the HBO Max feature “8-Bit Christmas.”

Of his character, Malas says, “There’s two sides of Jerome. There’s a dorky side and there’s also a cringe, thinks-he’s-cool side. He wants to be part of the cool kids and have a girlfriend and not be an outsider. So, Jerome becomes part of the school dance group, Liquid Smoke, who are the school bullies. One of the girls who is friends with the kids bullying Prem, Amanda, becomes his girlfriend, and she texts him to break up with Prem. Jerome doesn’t want to be bullied anymore, so he parts ways with Prem.”

Says Ambudkar, ”Even though Jerome kind of drops Prem as a friend, we still have to love him because Jerome’s just trying to fit in too. He’s just kind of doing it a different way. And so, when we found our little Max Malas, who’s, I think, 11 going on 111, we were pretty excited. He’s a sweet young man. He’s got a lot of talent, and when he focuses in and when he really drops into

Jerome, he's really fun to watch. He looks great on camera, he's super subtle, he understands his character."

Eager for the public to experience "World's Best," Ambudkar says, "This movie is gonna bring a lot of light, music, laughter and unconditional love. And it's something that the entire family can watch together, and it's what I wanted to make."

Joking, he adds, "If I can get my two-year-old to watch this movie, I'll retire. If I can get this kid to sit down and watch it, it'll be like, I'm done."

ABOUT THE CAST

2023 should prove to be quite a year for multi-hyphenate **UTKARSH AMBUDKAR (Suresh, Executive Producer/Written by/Original Songs)**, one of the freshest, smartest, most relevant voices in the business right now. Currently co-leading CBS' "Ghosts," TV's number one new comedy, Ambudkar recently co-starred on the Hulu limited series "The Dropout," about the rise and fall of Elizabeth Holmes (played by Amanda Seyfried) and her medical testing start-up, Theranos.

In 2021 Ambudkar co-starred in the 20th Century Studios feature "Free Guy," opposite Ryan Reynolds, Taika Waititi, Jodie Comer, Joe Keery and Lil Rel Howery. Later that year he joined the casts of the critically acclaimed Netflix series "Never Have I Ever" and "Special."

Ambudkar's film credits include the Sundance darlings "Blindspotting" and "Brittany Runs a Marathon." In the latter Ambudkar is the romantic lead to the titular character (Jillian Bell), an underachieving hot mess of a 27-year-old woman who decides to take control of her life—one New York City block at a time. His features résumé also includes "Tick, Tick… Boom!" with Andrew Garfield, "Ride Along 2" with Kevin Hart and Ice Cube (with whom he also co-starred in "Barbershop 3"), "Game Over, Man!," "The Broken Hearts Gallery," "Marry Me" and "Godmothered."

A rapper and creative force from a young age, Ambudkar was an original member of the Beatards, a NYC-based underground hip-hop group (early aughts) that performed alongside acts like Santigold, Azealia Banks, G-Eazy, Public Enemy, Questlove and more. His work with the Beatards eventually helped Ambudkar land the role of Donald, a member of the competitive Treblemakers, in "Pitch Perfect" with Anna Kendrick, Elizabeth Banks and Rebel Wilson.

Following "Pitch Perfect," Ambudkar snagged the role of Rishi in "The Mindy Project." More recently for television, he played Raj, a young, charismatic announcer pitted against Hank Azaria's Brockmire in the second season of the IFC series. Ambudkar's TV credits also include Showtime's "White Famous," where he regularly stole scenes as a Hollywood agent, "House of Lies" with Don

Cheadle, TNT's "Legends," a recurring arc on ABC's "The Muppets," and a guest role on Hulu's anthology series "Dimension 404." In 2016 Ambudkar played Apu's nephew Jay, the first Indian American actor to lend his voice to "The Simpsons." A year later, in comedian Hari Kondabolu's documentary "The Problem With Apu" (2017), Ambudkar discussed the cultural ripple effects of one of the few South Asian characters on TV.

Born in Baltimore, Md., Ambudkar trained at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. While in New York, he acted in various plays and received a Lucille Lortel Award nomination for his work in "Animals Out of Paper," by Rajiv Joseph at the Second Stage Theatre.

Originating the role of Aaron Burr in the developmental readings of "Hamilton," Ambudkar later reunited with Lin-Manuel Miranda as part of the improvisational rap group Freestyle Love Supreme, named in tribute to the John Coltrane jazz suite. Accompanied by keyboards and beats, the group performs spoken and sung numbers that are created in real time based on suggestions from the audience. The group performed at a variety of festivals and venues around the world, and episodes ran on Pivot in 2014 and Seeso two years later. Ambudkar and his cohorts reconvened for Freestyle Love Supreme's Broadway run at the Booth Theater to rave reviews. Thomas Kail ("Hamilton," "In the Heights") directed and produced along with Miranda, Jill Furman and Jon Steingart. The filmed version recently garnered a GRAMMY® Award nomination.

Ambudkar's debut album, "Vanity," dropped in 2019 and was quickly followed by "Petty." In 2020 he released "The Misfits EP" and the single "Self-Respect." His brand of raw and melodic hip-hop addresses race, the first-generation immigrant experience, politics and Hollywood and also features Ambudkar's old rap crew, including Miranda, "Blindspotting"'s Daveed Diggs and Rafael Casal, and a variety of South Asian artists such as Das Racist's Heems, Brooklyn Shanti, Kaly and Samora Pinderhughes.

PUNAM PATEL (Priya) was nominated for an Emmy® for outstanding actress in a short form comedy or drama for her work on Ryan O'Connell's Netflix comedy series "Special." She was cast as a series regular in the Lorne Michaels–produced, Chris Rock–directed NBC series "The Kenan Show," opposite Kenan Thompson and Andy Garcia, which was picked up to series originally and is now being redeveloped. Punam has appeared in truTV's "Adam Ruins Everything," Charlie Day's "The Cool Kids" (Fox), Amy Poehler's "I Feel Bad" (NBC) and Esther Povitsky's "Alone Together "(Freeform). She also starred in several pilots, including "Now & Then," "Brown Girls" (Freeform) and Shonda Rhimes' "Toast" (ABC). Punam was a series regular on McG's "Kevin From Work" (Freeform) and Joey McIntyre's "Return of the Mac" (Pop TV). She was a New Face at Montreal's Just for Laughs Comedy Festival and has participated in the CBS Annual Diversity Showcase as well. Punam cut her teeth in Chicago and is an alum of both the iO Training Center and Second City Chicago stage, where she has written and performed. She currently can be seen in "I Love That for You" on Showtime.

A bilingual Korean American actor, **JAKE CHOI (Mr. Oh)** was previously seen in the gritty, surrealistic independent feature "Please Baby Please," directed by Amanda Kramer, which premiered as the opening-night film at the International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) in January 2022. He shared the screen with Harry Melling, Demi Moore, Karl Glusman and Andrea Riseborough.

In late 2021 he shot a supporting lead role opposite Nico Tortorella, Carl Clemons-Hopkins, Emily Hampshire and Heather Matarazzo in the LGBTQ indie "The Mattachine Family." Earlier in 2021 Choi filmed Universal 1440's "R.I.P.D. 2" in Budapest, Hungary.

Most recognizable for his series-regular role of Miggy on the ABC comedy series "Single Parents" (executive produced by Elizabeth Meriwether & JJ Philbin), Choi also recurred frequently on ABC's single-camera comedy series "American Housewife" and guest-starred on the Syfy series "The Magicians." In 2019 Choi was seen in theaters nationwide in the Warner Bros./MGM feature film "The Sun Is Also a Star," in which he played the older brother and black sheep of a strict Korean American family. Choi's prior credits include TV roles on such series as "Younger," "Difficult People," "Broad City," "Law and Order: SVU," "Gotham" and "Hawaii Five-0," among others.

In June 2019 Choi received an HRC Visibility Award for his outspokenness with regard to LGBTQ+ issues and his own coming out as "sexually fluid."

MAX MALAS (Jerome) is a 12-year-old native New Yorker whose path to acting has been inspired by his paternal grandparents' international opera, stage and screen success. While working the stage and screen are his passion, Max's superpower is his dyslexia, which he uses to fuel his creative spirit. An avid history buff, Max is always prepared to share his thoughts on World Wars I and II, distinguish the different flags of the world, and discuss the value of democracy, among other topics. He made his acting debut in 2020 in Apple TV+'s "Little Voice" and has been working consistently ever since. Recent roles include the comedic nemesis Jeff Farmer in HBO Max's "8-Bit Christmas," Little Orphan Sammy in Hulu's "Binge 2: It's a Wonderful Binge" and guest-star roles on NBC's "New Amsterdam" and Paramount's "The Really Loud House."

PIPER WALLACE's **(Claire)** television credits include Max on "Blueberry's Clubhouse" seasons 1-4 (Arkansas PBS). Her theater credits include Matilda in "Matilda the Musical" (Theatre Squared), Susan in "White Christmas" (Argenta Theater), Molly in "Annie" (Murry's Dinner Playhouse), Rhoda Penmark in "The Bad Seed" (Center on the Square) and May Belle Aarons in "Bridge to Terabithia" (The Studio Theater).

Born and raised in Southern California, **KAYLA NJERI (Mercedes)** has always loved acting from a very young age. She got her start when she followed her little sister to her print ad job, where the producer asked Njeri who she was; when she responded with "a ray of sunshine," the

producer hired her on the spot. That sparked Njeri's love and passion for performing and getting laughs. From there on she performed in several high school and local theatrical productions and soon after scored her representation.

She most recently acted alongside Yara Shahidi, who also served as an executive producer, in the forthcoming film "Sitting in Bars with Cake." Outside of acting, Njeri loves to learn languages and find as many people as possible to practice with her. She is currently conversational in Swahili and Korean and wants to add more languages to the mix. She hopes to travel and learn the languages of the places she works in.

DORIAN GIORDANO (Gabe) is a Canadian actor of Indigenous (Navajo) and Latino (Guatemalan) descent.

Dorian Giordano's most recent credits include a supporting lead in "Reindeer Games Homecoming" (Lifetime), series lead on "Lockdown" (The Family Channel) and three back-to-back VR projects with director Eli Roth.

Outside of acting, Giordano is also a world champion professional freestyle BMX rider. He loves dirt-biking, snowboarding, surfing, cliff diving, skateboarding and playing electric guitar.

KATHRYN GREENWOOD (Ms. Sage) is a Toronto-born veteran of screen and stage who can currently be seen in two CBS smash-hit comedies, as Margaret Farnsby on "Ghosts" and as Aunt Patty on "So Help Me Todd." Career-highlight television roles include ABC's "Whose Line Is It Anyway?," CBC's "Wind at My Back" (Gemini Award nomination for her performance as Grace Bailey), "The Handmaid's Tale," "The Rick Mercer Report," "The Kids in the Hall" and "Jann." Her film highlights include roles in "Unless," "Poltergeist," "Run This Town," "The Exchange," "The Kids in the Hall's Brain Candy" and the upcoming "The King Tide." She sold out theaters across North America with her critically acclaimed "Women Fully Clothed" shows, which she co-created, and has written for Elle Canada and The Globe and Mail. Greenwood was the first winner of the Canadian Comedy Award for female improviser of the year, and she won a Dora Mavor Moore Award for her work with The Second City, where she spent five years writing and performing.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

ROSHAN SETHI (Director) is a physician, screenwriter and director who began writing as a student at Harvard Medical School and co-created Fox's "The Resident" while finishing his residency. He is the director and co-writer of "7 Days," which premiered at the 2021 Tribeca Film Festival and won the Independent Spirit Award for best first feature. It was released theatrically by Cinedigm in March 2022 and is now available on Hulu. He is also the co-writer of "Call Jane,"

directed by Phyllis Nagy and starring Elizabeth Banks and Sigourney Weaver, which premiered at Sundance in January 2022 and was released theatrically in October 2022. It's also available on Hulu. He is also a palliative radiation oncologist at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute/Brigham and Women's Hospital and an instructor in medicine on the faculty of Harvard Medical School.

JAMIE KING (Written by) studied theater at New York University, where he created live shows and musicals for the Upright Citizen's Brigade Theater and other venues. After moving to L.A., he worked on Marvel's "Jessica Jones" as an assistant, rising to staff writer in the first season and sharing a story credit on the Peabody Award–winning finale. He returned as a writer for seasons 2 and 3. His coming-of-age horror pilot "Castle Rock" won best teleplay at the 2016 Slamdance Film Festival, and he penned the horror feature "Livestream" for Legendary Digital and contributed to Marvel's "Avengers" video game for Square Enix. ITV Studios optioned his medical-thriller pilot "Inpatient," and he was an executive story editor on the sci-fi drama "Impulse" for YouTube Premiere.

THOMAS KAIL (Producer) has Broadway directing credits that include "Sweeney Todd," "Hamilton" (Tony Award®), "Freestyle Love Supreme," "In the Heights" (Tony nomination), "Lombardi" and "Magic/Bird." His Off-Broadway selected directing credits include the world premieres of "Hamilton," "Dry Powder," "Tiny Beautiful Things," and "Kings" at The Public Theater; the world premiere of "The Wrong Man" at MCC Theater; the world premiere of "In the Heights"; "Broke-ology"; the world premiere of "When I Come to Die" at Lincoln Center Theater; and the world premiere of "Daphne's Dive" at Signature Theatre. His Broadway producing credits include "Sweeney Todd," "Derren Brown: Secret" and "Freestyle Love Supreme" (recipient of a special Tony Award). Television directing and producing credits include "We Were the Lucky Ones" on Hulu (upcoming), "Up Here" on Hulu, "Hamilton" on Disney+ (Emmy® Award), "Fosse/Verdon" (WGA Award) on FX and "Grease: Live" (Emmys for directing and producing) on Fox. He is a graduate of Wesleyan University and a recipient of Kennedy Center Honors.

KATE SULLIVAN (Producer) is a Los Angeles–based director and producer and currently the head of development for Thomas Kail's company, Old 320 Sycamore. Sullivan has produced "Fosse/Verdon" (FX), "Up Here" (Hulu) and the upcoming "We Were the Lucky Ones" (Hulu), which airs in 2024. On the film side, Sullivan worked with Thomas Kail as the associate director of "Grease Live!" on Fox. Previously, she worked for Steven Spielberg at DreamWorks, with director Mark Waters on the film "The Spiderwick Chronicles" and then with producer Jessica Tuchinsky on "500 Days of Summer." She has worked for 20th Century Fox on movies such as "Jennifer's Body" and "The Rocker" and for Universal Pictures on movies such as "Bridesmaids" and "Pitch Perfect."

Born in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada, **TERRY GOULD (Executive Producer)** worked as a production assistant/third assistant director on the Oscar®-winning "Children of a Lesser God" in

Saint John in 1985, before moving to Toronto in 1986 to pursue a career in film. From then on he has worked steadily for nearly four decades, beginning as an assistant director, a position he held for nine years, prior to moving into producing. Beginning in 1993 he served as a line producer and/or production manager or UPM on 18 TV and cable films, and served as a producer or supervising producer on more than 40 TV/cable/streaming films, pilots and miniseries. In 2007 he served as producer on the theatrical feature "Kit Kittredge: An American Girl."

Gould received an Emmy® nomination for producing the 2006 Lifetime film "Why I Wore Lipstick," Humanitas nominations for producing the children's films "Felicity" in 2006 and "Molly" in 2007—winning for the latter—and four Gemini nominations, the Peabody Award and the American Bar Association's Silver Gavel Award for producing 2002's "The Interrogation of Michael Crowe" for Court TV.

Director of photography SING HOWE YAM's notable style can be seen throughout his extensive portfolio, which ranges from entertaining features and television to evocative music videos. Most recently Yam shot the second season of Netflix's original series "Flaked," starring Will Arnett as a struggling self-help guru.

Yam's short film "I Know You from Somewhere," a tale about the perils of "going viral," was an official selection at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival. He also lensed several features including director Nick Leopold's "Pig Helmet" and "Redefining Love" with director James Seppelfrick.

Recent additions to Yam's impressive music video credits include "Lovely" for Billie Eilish featuring Khalid, 5 Seconds of Summer's "Want You Back," SZA's "Broken Clocks," Damian Marley's "Medication Remix" featuring Wiz Khalifa and Ty Dolla Sign, and Rae Sremmurd's "A Day in the Life." His "Fear Nothing" video for singer Selah Sue was named an official selection in the 2016 Camerimage Festival music video competition. Additional artists he's worked with include Justin Timberlake, Drake, Eminem featuring Sia and Hayley Kiyoko.

Yam has also photographed commercials for a wide variety of high-end clients including Nike, Honda, Google and Athleta featuring Alicia Keys.

Raised in Virginia, Yam lives in Los Angeles.

LIZ BISCHOF (Production Design) is known for large builds like the dystopian city featured in sci-fi drama "See" (Apple TV+), but that is just one of her career-defining highlights. It's precisely that love for challenge and leaning into the unknown that makes Bischof tick as a designer.

In fact, she has been creating, building and painting ever since she was a child. At 15 she apprenticed in a prop shop for a local theater. And at 17 she was accepted into the National Theatre School in Montreal.

It wasn't long before she was working as a prop artist on Broadway shows "The Phantom of the Opera" and "Cats," before crossing the pond to work for the English National Opera.

As a Chinese Filipino Canadian artist who has lived, worked, studied and traveled all over the world, Bischof brings a unique cultural perspective to every project. And with a background in the tight-knit world of theater, she strives to recreate that collaborative work environment—no matter the size of the set.

Bischof has tackled projects from stage to screen all over the world. She draws inspiration from the magical realism of Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges, the graphic "soundsuits" (wearable sculptures) of American artist Nick Cave, and the sculptural style of Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava.

Currently, Toronto is home for Bischof, her architect husband and sons. But when she's not working, she travels—absorbing all the art and architecture each new city has to offer.

JONAH MORAN (Editor) is an Emmy®- and Eddie Award–nominated editor versed in the worlds of narrative film, television and commercial storytelling. He is best known for his work on the live theater feature "Hamilton," from Thomas Kail and Lin-Manuel Miranda for Disney+, and the Emmy Award–winning limited series "Fosse/Verdon" starring Michelle Williams. Moran also edited the series "Little Voice," created by Jessie Nelson and Sara Bareilles for Apple TV+, as well as the groundbreaking National Geographic series "Mars," produced by Ron Howard. His documentary work includes the critically lauded Disney+ series "Light and Magic," multiple episodes of ESPN's award-winning series "30 for 30" and several films following music icons like Miley Cyrus, Nicki Minaj, Demi Lovato and Britney Spears.

MICHELLE LYTE's **(Costumes)** approach to design is unconventional and forward thinking. Lyte demonstrated her love of clothing at the early age of 3 years old, and her aunt Joan, a graduate of London College of Fashion, was her mentor. At age 9, Lyte began constructing garments for herself and friends; by age 21 she was designing and constructing garments for small music videos, which launched her career as a fashion stylist.

Lyte has graced many facets of the fashion and film industry. Her expertise led her to work with celebrity clients, as a stylist for MTV Canada, Canada's "Next Top Model" Cycle III, editorial and advertising, as well as an on-air style expert. Lyte served as costume designer on her first series for MTV, "Valemont," in 2009. Lyte has been attached to some of Toronto's coolest productions throughout the years: Emmy® Award–winning "The Handmaid's Tale," "Suicide Squad," "The Best Man Holiday" and "Suits." Lyte's most recent projects are "The Kings of Napa" (Own TV), "Awake" (Netflix), "In Contempt" (BET), "In the Shadow of the Moon" (Netflix) and "Wendy Williams: The Movie" (Lifetime). In 2020 Lyte won the Canadian Alliance of Film & Television Costume Arts and Design (CAFTCAD) award for best costume design in the period category for

her work on the TV movie “Salt-N-Pepa.” Lyte’s tagline is “I dress people for Reel and Real.” And she has no plans of stopping anytime soon.

An international performer and creative with three decades of experience in street dance culture, storytelling and talent development, **BRADLEY RAPIER (Choreography)** pioneered a movement in Los Angeles that ignited the community, launched countless artists and positively impacted the landscape for street dance in culture and media. Rapier went on to perform, choreograph and orchestrate complex multilayered productions at the highest levels, from L.A.’s television and commercial world to New York’s Broadway stages.

An award-winning choreographer, Rapier’s collaborations include work with Tommy Kail (“Once on This Island”), Des McAnuff (“Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots,” “Jesus Christ Superstar”) and Charles Randolph Wright (“Lincoln Heights,” labs for “Motown the Musical”). He created and co-produced the story of his crew the Groovaloos in their own acclaimed Off-Broadway stage show touted as the “Cirque du Soleil of the Street” and led them onto “So You Think You Can Dance,” “Dancing with the Stars,” “The Wayne Brady Show,” “Ellen” and “Superstars of Dance.” Rapier staged multiple performances for the World Choreography Awards and was a contributing choreographer for SuperCr3w for its “World of Dance” and “America’s Best Dance Crew” performances.

A dynamic speaker and host, Rapier today can be found activating countless individuals and teams from classrooms to boardrooms and beyond. Using powerful street dance culture analogies and trainings from Groove Theory™ and GROOVE Mindset™, Rapier’s uniquely crafted experiences invite us to Step in the Circle, guide us along creative pathways to break free from self-doubt and apprehension to discover new levels of certainty, collaborative ability, and innovation.

Rapier’s journey is one of those impossible stories. A Canadian native and the only kid in his neighborhood with a sweet Afro, he grew up in a town known for oil, rodeos and ranching. He was following a medical career path like his father, but that all changed when he became a founding member of Streetscape, a pioneering troupe responsible for bringing the street dance style of popping and boogaloo to Canada. After winning the Canadian Talent Search and taking top honors at the IMTA Awards in Los Angeles and New York, Rapier relocated to the United States. As a dancer he has performed in films from “La La Land” to Disney’s classic “A Goofy Movie,” with artists from Diana Ross to Gwen Stefani, and from Super Bowl Halftime Spectaculars to award shows. Rapier has taught master classes and adjudicated events internationally including workshops for the cast of Cirque du Soleil’s “Michael Jackson One.” Among numerous teaching credentials, he spent six years as an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California. Prior to leaving Los Angeles he was the artistic director of Cantinas Arts for seven years, creating content and weaving a wide array of live and taped productions for the nonprofit faith-based foundation. Rapier and his family now live in Austin, Texas.

CHARLIE WILDER (Original Songs), aka Captain Planet, is a globetrotting DJ and music producer, world renowned for his trademark blend of eclectic global music styles, and for his passionate high-energy DJ sets where he seamlessly jumps between house music, global bass, Latin, Afrobeat, reggae, funk and disco. In 2022 he played in over 30 cities throughout 10 countries, including a major European tour with GUTS & Bosq, while fans streamed his songs over five million times. In 2023 he released his fifth studio album, "Sounds Like Home," on Bastard Jazz Records.

Fueled by an early love of hip-hop music, Charlie B. Wilder (the man behind Captain Planet) began DJ-ing and making beats on a Tascam cassette 4-track in his teens. He soon developed an obsession with vinyl records and digging for samples, which led to an expanded appreciation of reggae, Latin and African music as well as a curiosity for other styles from around the world. After being offered a primetime slot playing international music on WNYU's "Passport" radio show, Wilder began making frequent trips to the "World" music section of Lincoln Center's Public Library, eventually acquiring its entire collection. Flipping these global records the way hip-hop producers traditionally sample, he used these international sounds as the ingredients when concocting his trademark "gumbo funk" style. Today his music is recognized around the world, with his latest releases highlighting his love of the more organic sounds of vintage global funk, soul and disco.

After cutting his teeth in the competitive New York City club scene, Captain Planet released his debut album, "Cookin' Gumbo," in 2011 on Bastard Jazz Records. The album sold thousands of copies and led to placements on numerous TV shows such as "Orange Is the New Black," "Silicon Valley," "The Bridge," "Entourage" and "CSI: New York." Since then, the Captain has released three more successful full-length albums ("Esperanto Slang," 2014, "Night Visions," 2017, and "NO VISA," 2020) on Bastard Jazz Records, as well as a slew of internationally recognized remixes (both bootleg and official) for the likes of Little Dragon, Erykah Badu, Katy B, Mayer Hawthorne, Nicola Cruz, Novalima, Tittsworth, Alice Russell, Fania Records and Gilles Peterson's Havana Cultura project. His cassette mixtape "Mystery Trip Vol. 1" was included in Sasha Frere-Jones' "Best Music of 2012," and his song "BIG MAN" was listed as a top 10 song of 2020 by KCRW. His song "Un Poquito Más" featuring Chico Mann has earned over three million streams and was featured in major ad campaigns for Target and Honda. Inspired by the success of that song, the two artists teamed up in 2017 for a full-length collaboration album and released "Night Visions" to critical acclaim, including a mention on the New York Times' "Best Songs of the Week." The two performed live for the globally renowned "Boiler Room Sessions" and the taste-making "Morning Becomes Eclectic" radio program on KCRW. Captain Planet's original productions have been supported from global DJs like Folamour, Diplo, Major Lazer, Nightmares on Wax, Melvo Baptiste, GUTS and Gilles Peterson, among others.

RAASHI KULKARNI (Original Score) is a composer and pianist based in Los Angeles. She has established a distinct compositional voice that can be heard across a variety of genres including drama, comedy, adventure, animation and action. Kulkarni is one of eight composers and the first person of Indian origin to be selected for the Universal Composers Initiative, developed by

NBCUniversal's Global Talent Development & Inclusion group partnered with Universal Global Film Music. Her latest scoring work includes Netflix's "Wedding Season" and the award-winning documentary "Barefoot Empress." Her previous scoring work includes composing additional music for over 150 episodes on series such as the CW's "Supergirl," "Arrow," "The Flash" and "DC's Legends of Tomorrow." Kulkarni composed and orchestrated the DC Universe's first Bollywood-inspired musical, featured on "Legends of Tomorrow." In addition to film and television scoring, Kulkarni is a globally recognized musical artist. Her two independent albums, "Raashi" (2018) and "Afterglow" (2020), debuted at No. 1 and No. 2, respectively, on the iTunes World Music Charts.

Kulkarni is a voting member of both the Television Academy and Recording Academy and serves on both the Membership and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committees for the latter. She is also currently serving as executive director of the Alliance for Women Film Composers.

Over the last decade, Kulkarni has performed in concert tours across the globe with several prominent artists from the United States and India, including world-renowned Bollywood composers Vishal Dadlani and Shekhar Ravjiani. She has performed as a featured pianist at the Shrine Auditorium, Kennedy Center, Smithsonian Museum, Patriot Center, Warner Theatre and Kodak Hall. Her YouTube piano covers, which are arranged solely by ear, have been discovered and recognized by iHeartRadio, On Air with Ryan Seacrest, Capitol Records (as part of Beck's successful GRAMMY® campaign), and YouTube India.

JONGNIC BONTEMPS (Original Score) is a uniquely modern film composer, harmonizing a classical education with his rich tech background. As a maestro of Silicon Valley, he wrote for a wide range of projects, including the CW sci-fi series "4400"; the Netflix docuseries "We Are: The Brooklyn Saints"; "Dance Dreams: Hot Chocolate Nutcracker," the Netflix- and Shondaland-produced documentary about the Debbie Allen Dance Company's award-winning production of "The Nutcracker"; and the Netflix documentary "Murder to Mercy: The Cyntoia Brown Story."

He was recently nominated for a Critics Choice Award for his work on the 2021 Sundance documentary selection "My Name Is Pauli Murray," directed by Julie Cohen and Betsy West. He is known for his hip-hop–infused score for the Tribeca-favorite documentary "United Skates," and rousing additional music for the acclaimed film "Creed II," directed by Steven Caple Jr. He became the go-to composer for Caple Jr. while scoring his coming-of-age drama "The Land," for which he also orchestrated the song "This Bitter Land," performed by Nas and Erykah Badu. JB's other recent work includes the CNN special "The People vs. the Klan," the dramatic feature "Last Night in Rozzie," directed by Sean Gannet, the CNN Films documentary "Citizen Ashe" that premiered at the Telluride Film Festival, and the Netflix film "Wedding Season." His latest work includes the Arkane Studios video game "Redfall" and the highly anticipated addition to the action sci-fi franchise "Transformers: Rise of the Beasts."

JB has scored dozens of features, series and video games in all genres, fusing a contemporary sound with timeless emotion. His other recent projects include original scores for the Lifetime

biopic “The Clark Sisters: The First Ladies of Gospel,” the Toni Braxton–led drama “Faith Under Fire,” the Sundance selection “Leimert Park,” produced by Charles King (“Mudbound”), and additional music for the Epix series “Godfather of Harlem,” starring Forest Whitaker. JB’s scores have echoed at Cannes, the Warsaw Film Festival, Pan African Film Festival and the American Black Film Festival, as well as at home on Netflix, CNN, HBO, BET, Lifetime, NBC, Showtime, Netflix, PBS and Disney XD.

Brooklyn born, JB learned the piano and soaked up his gospel and jazz surroundings. He studied music at Yale and later found himself at the heart of the tech industry as a software developer and entrepreneur after selling his startup to HP. He thrived there for several years but eventually decided to pursue his deeper passion and jumped headfirst into the film-scoring program at USC and the Sundance Film Music Lab. He apprenticed as a programmer for numerous A-list Hollywood composers before breaking out on his own.

“Film music has to tell a story without words,” JB says. “Its job is to add depth and dimension to the images and words presented on screen. That’s what attracted me to the medium: the opportunity to really express emotion with music alone.”

KELLY APPLEGATE (Co-Producer) is a New York City–based producer and executive for Thomas Kail’s company, Old 320 Sycamore. Applegate has worked on television projects for the company such as “Fosse/Verdon” (FX), associate produced “Up Here” (Hulu) and co-produced “We Were the Lucky Ones” (Hulu), which airs in 2024.

Academy Award®–nominated **SAVAN KOTECHA (Executive Song Producer)** is an Indian American songwriter and record producer who has written for almost every major pop artist in the last 20 years. His artist collaborations include the biggest hits for Ariana Grande, The Weeknd, Ellie Goulding, Usher, Maroon 5, Justin Bieber, Camila Cabello, One Direction, Sam Smith and many more. He is the recipient of nine BMI Awards, 21 ASCAP Awards, and songs that have had 18 GRAMMY® nominations. His songs have achieved number-one status all over the world, having sold more than 500 million copies. His composition “Husavik,” for the 2021 film “Eurovision Song Contest: The Story of Fire Saga,” co-written by Max Grahn and Rickard Göransson, was nominated for an Academy Award® for best original song.